

INFO LOG-00 AID-00 AMAD-00 CIAE-00 INL-00 DNI-00 DODE-00
 DOTE-00 DS-00 EB-00 FAAE-00 FBIE-00 VCI-00 H-00
 TEDE-00 INR-00 VCIE-00 NSAE-00 ISN-00 ISNE-00 DOHS-00
 FMPC-00 SP-00 IRM-00 SSO-00 SS-00 DSCC-00 PRM-00
 DRL-00 G-00 NFAT-00 SAS-00 SWCI-00 /000W

-----E39677 161503Z /38

R 161547Z JUN 06
 FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1685
 INFO ALL US CONSULATES IN MEXICO COLLECTIVE
 NSC WASHDC

RELEASED IN PART
 B6, B1, 1.4(D)

C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 003325

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/15/2016
 TAGS: PGOV, PINR, PREL, MX
 SUBJECT: LEADING POLLSTER GIVES EDGE TO AMLO

REF: MEXICO 792

Classified By: ACTING POLITICAL MINISTER-COUNSELOR WILLIAM H. DUNCAN, R
 EASONS, 1.4 (B/D).

1. (C) SUMMARY: In a June 15 meeting, [REDACTED] one of Mexico's most respected pollsters, told poloff that [REDACTED] believed that if the election were held today, the Party of the Democratic Revolution's (PRD) Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO) would defeat the National Action Party's (PAN) Felipe Calderon by a narrow margin, not exceeding three percent. [REDACTED] said AMLO has enjoyed momentum ever since the candidates' June 6 debate, when AMLO accused Calderon of influence peddling on behalf of a relative. [REDACTED]

B6

B6

B6

B6

B6

B6

[REDACTED] -- reports that according to [REDACTED] polling, the PRI's Roberto Madrazo remains in contention, with his third place poll result falling within the margin of error. [REDACTED] believes that at this late stage in the campaign, the final result may turn on the quality of the parties' get-out-the-vote operation, an area in which she asserts the PRD holds a decided advantage over the PAN. END SUMMARY.

AMLO Enjoys Post-Debate Bounce

2. (C) On June 15, poloff met with [REDACTED]

B6

[redacted] and widely considered to be among Mexico's leading pollsters. [redacted] told poloff that based on [redacted] most recent poll, published in Milennio on June 13, AMLO enjoys a slight lead over Calderon, 34.2% to 31%, with Roberto Madrazo trailing closely behind at 29.6%. [redacted] said that all three leading candidates were within the poll's margin of error, notwithstanding the assertion of some observers that this had become a two-man race. [redacted] agreed that AMLO has enjoyed momentum ever since the June 6 candidates' debate, in which he put Calderon on the defensive by accusing the latter's brother-in-law of tax evasion and of benefiting improperly from state contracts. [redacted] noted that at this late stage in the campaign, the parties' grass-roots operation could make a huge difference, and that the PRD's get-out-the-vote operation was far superior to that of the PAN. [redacted] concluded that if the election were held today, AMLO would win, albeit by a margin of no more than three percent.

B6

B6

B6

B6

B6

B6

B6

Don't Count the PRI Out

3. (C) [redacted] repeatedly emphasized that according to [redacted] polling, Roberto Madrazo remained in contention, arguing that rival polls showing him in a distant third place were methodologically flawed. [redacted] explained that other pollsters attribute the same likelihood of voting to professed PAN, PRD and PRI supporters, whereas in [redacted] judgment, those voters who admit at this late date to supporting the PRI tend to be more committed to their candidate than most professed PRD and PAN voters. As [redacted] believes PRI supporters are more likely to vote -- and as the PRI has the most extensive grass-roots machinery to bring its voters to the polls -- [redacted] believes that rival polls underestimate the party's strength.

B6

B6

B6

B6

B6

B6

B1

Discounting the Significance of "Strategic Voting"

5. (C) [redacted] discounted the significance of "strategic voting," which assumes that voters hoping to keep a particular candidate -- in this case, AMLO -- out of office would vote for the strongest of his two rivals, regardless of

B6

UNCLASSIFIED

their usual party affiliation. [] said strategic voting may have been a factor in 2000, as at that time PRD voters agreed with their PAN counterparts on the necessity of defeating the PRI; many were willing to vote for the PAN's Vicente Fox over the PRD's Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, as Fox was by far the stronger opposition candidate. [] said such strategic voting was unlikely to be a major factor this year because (i) the third place candidate, Roberto Madrazo, remains in contention, so his voters are unlikely to desert him, and (ii) unlike in 2000, this year the public is nearly equally divided in thirds as to which party it wishes to keep out of power. [] questioned the logic of those in the PAN who sought to weaken the PRI in the hopes of attracting defecting PRI voters, arguing that PRI voters were more likely to defect to the PRD than to the PAN. (Note: A poll published

in the June 15 Reforma contradicts [] assertion. According to this poll, 11% of the voting public would be willing to vote for an alternate candidate if they believed their preferred candidate had no possibility of winning; under those circumstances, 28% of Madrazo supporters said they would switch their vote to Calderon, whereas only 22% said they would switch to AMLO. End note.)

Negative Campaign Hurts the PAN

6. (C) [] noted that the AMLO's attacks on Calderon's "inconvenient brother-in-law" had clearly taken a toll on the candidate's public support, and [] expected the PRD to continue with this tactic. [] argued, however, that a PAN-led negative campaign against AMLO would have far less traction because over the years, AMLO's political rivals have attacked him on so many different issues that they have largely inoculated him against attack. [] believes the PAN would have to come up with a truly spectacular revelation for it to significantly damage AMLO.

Focusing on Instability

7. (C) Turning to the volatile teachers' union strike now taking place in Oaxaca, [] opined that the current unrest would likely discourage turnout in that state. Likewise, the PRI-led state government's poor handling of the crisis will likely sour the public on the PRI. Since the PRI, followed by the PRD, are by far the two strongest parties in Oaxaca, a diminished turnout would inure to the benefit of the PAN; although the PAN was unlikely to pick up many votes in Oaxaca, the PRI's and PRD's vote totals there would be

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

suppressed.

8. (C) [] said she was most concerned about a recent poll revealing that 13% of Mexicans expected there to be post-election unrest in their own communities. [] had not seen such a high percentage respond affirmatively to this question since the 1990 Mexico state elections, the first major election held after the Carlos Salinas's suspect victory over Cuauhtemoc Cardenas in the 1988 presidential race. [] said that the question asked in this particular poll, focusing on the situation in voters' own communities, was far more telling than the more general question of whether voters expected post-election unrest; voters were unlikely to respond affirmatively to the former question unless they knew of neighbors who were preparing for or at least speaking about possible demonstrations.

B6

B6

B6

B1

Visit Mexico City's Classified Web Site at
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/wha/mexicocity>

BASSETT

NNNN

UNCLASSIFIED